



International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

ADMISSIONS SAMPLE EXAMINATION PAPER

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The sample examination paper below illustrates the style of questions that will feature in the exam and as such you can use them as examples to get you ready for the overall experience of taking the actual exam. The text below and the questions that follow do not fully represent the text type, number of questions, range of content and/or the level of difficulty of the actual questions that will be on the exam.

The questions in the admissions examination **may vary** in wording, length and/or level of difficulty but will fall into the categories of **Reading Comprehension and Literary Analysis, Grammar and Syntax** and **Writing**.

Below the sample questions, there are **suggested answers** to support you in preparing for the admissions examination.

SECTION I: READING COMPREHENSION AND LITERARY ANALYSIS

Read the extract below carefully and answer the questions that follow. Give articulate responses using evidence from the text where necessary.

“I guess if you live long enough,” my mom said to Aunt Gloria, “you get your fifteen minutes of fame.” Mom was on the car phone to Aunt Gloria. We were heading for Whispering Oaks to see my great-grandmother Breckenridge, who’s lived there since I was a little girl. They call it an Elder Care Facility. Needless to say, I hated going. The reason for Great-grandmother’s fame is that she was born in 1899. Now it’s January 2001. If you’re one of those people who claim the new century begins in 2001, not 2000, even *you* have to agree that Great-grandmother Breckenridge has lived in three centuries. This is her claim to fame.

Aunt Gloria’s voice filled the car, “If you take my advice,” she told Mom, “DON’T let the media in to interview Grandma. She doesn’t know where she is, let alone how many centuries she’s lived in. Leave her in peace!”

Mom ended the conversation and parked in a frozen rut.

"I'll wait in the car," I said. "I have homework."

"Get out of the car," Mom said.

When we got to grandma's wing, the hall was full of camera crews and a woman from the suburban newspaper with a notepad. "Who are you people to Mrs. Breckenridge?" the newspaperwoman said.

Mom turned on them. "Listen, you're not going to be interviewing my grandmother," she said in a quiet bark. "I'll be glad to tell you anything you want to know about her, but you're not going in there. She's got nothing to say, and she needs a lot of rest."

But a voice came wavering out of Great-grandma's room. Quite an eerie, echoing voice. "Let them in!" the voice said. It had to be Great-grandma. Mom muttered, and the press surged forward. Mom and I went in and our eyes popped. Great-grandma was usually flat out in the bed, dozing, with a book in her hand. Today she was bright-eyed and propped up. She wore a fuzzy pink bed jacket. A matching bow was stuck in what remained of her hair.

"Oh, for pity's sake," Mom said. "They've got her done up like a Barbie doll." Great-grandma peered from the bed at Mom. "And who are you?" she asked.

"I'm Ann," Mom said carefully. "This is Megan," she said, meaning me.

"That's right," Great-grandma said. "At least you know who you are. Plenty around this place don't."

The guy with the camera on his shoulder barged in. The other guy turned on a blinding light. Great-grandma blinked. In the glare we noticed she wore a trace of lipstick. The TV anchor elbowed the woman reporter aside and stuck a mike in Great-grandma's face. Her claw hand came out from under the covers and tapped it.

"Is this thing on?" she inquired.

"Yes, ma'am," the TV anchor said.

"We're here to congratulate you for having lived in three centuries—for being a Three-Century Woman! A great achievement!"

"Nothing to it," she said. "You sure this mike's on? Let's do this in one take."

Mom stood still as a statue, wondering what was going to come out of Great-grandma's mouth next.

The anchor said, "To what do you attribute your long life?"

"I was only married once," Great-grandma said. "And he died young."

“And anything else?”

“Yes. I don’t look back. I live in the present.”

“You live for the present,” the anchor said, looking for an angle, “even now?”

“But you’ve lived through amazing times, Mrs. Breckenridge. And you never think back about them?”

“You mean you want to hear something interesting? Like how I lived through the San Francisco earthquake—the big one of oh-six?”

Beside me, Mom stirred. “You survived the 1906 San Francisco earthquake?” the anchor said.

“My folks and I were staying at that big hotel. You know the one. In the middle of the night, that room gave a shake, and the chiffonier walked right across the floor. You know what a chiffonier is?”

“A chest of drawers?” the anchor said.

“Close enough,” Great-grandma said. “And the pictures flapped on the walls. You never saw such a mess in your life.”

Mom nudged me and hissed, “She’s never been to San Francisco. She’s never been west of Denver. I’ve heard her say so.”

“Incredible!” the anchor said.

Great-grandma shrugged her little fuzzy pink shoulders. “I’ve been through too much. I don’t have time to remember it all. I was on the Hindenburg when it blew up, you know.”

Mom moaned, and the cameraman was practically standing on his head for a close-up.

“The Hindenburg!”

“That big gas thing the Germans built to fly over the Atlantic Ocean. It was called a zeppelin. Biggest thing you ever saw—five city blocks long. My husband and I were coming back from Europe. No, wait a minute.”

“My husband was dead by then. It was some other man. Anyway, the two of us were coming back on the Hindenburg. It was smooth as silk. You didn’t know you were moving. Great-grandma paused, caught up in the memories.”

“And then the Hindenburg exploded,” the anchor said, prompting her.

She nodded. "Then whoosh! The gondola heated up like an oven, and people peeled out of the windows. We hit the ground and bounced. When we hit again, the door fell off, and I walked out and kept going. The fire had about burned up my coat. And I lost a shoe."

"Fantastic!" the anchor breathed. "What detail!"

"Never," Mom muttered. "Never in her life."

"Ma'am, you are living history!" the anchor said. "And before we leave, we'll ask Mrs. Breckenridge if she has any predictions for this new twenty-first century ahead of us here in the Dawn of the Millennium."

"Three or four predictions," Great-grandma said, and paused again, stretching out her airtime. "Number one, taxes will be higher. Number two, it's going to be harder to find a place to park. And number three, a whole lot of people are going to live as long as I have, so get ready for us."

"And with those wise words," the anchor said, easing off the bed, "we leave Mrs. Breckenridge."

"And one more prediction," she said. "TV's on the way out. Your network ratings are already in the basement. It's all websites now. Son, I predict you'll be looking for work."

And that was it. The light went dead. So then it was just Mom and I in the room.

Mom said, "Grandma. Number one, you've never been to San Francisco. And number two, you never saw one of those zeppelin things."

Great-grandma shrugged. "No, but I can read." She nodded to the pile of books on her nightstand with her spectacles folded on top. "It was that TV dude in the five-hundred-dollar suit who set me off," Great-grandma said. "He dyes his hair, did you notice? He made me mad. He didn't notice I'm still here. He thought I was nothing but my memories. So I gave him some."

"You, Megan," she said. "Once upon a time, I was your age. How scary is that?"

She winked at me. She grinned and I grinned. I felt like giving her a kiss on her little wrinkled cheek, so I did. "I'll come and see you more often," I told her.

"Call first," she said. "I might be busy." Then she dozed.

Adapted from: *The Three Century Woman* by Richard Peck

SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

SECTION I: READING COMPREHENSION AND LITERARY ANALYSIS

1. What is the setting of the story, and why is this particular setting essential for the development of the story?

Sample answer: The story takes place at an elder care facility called Whispering Oaks. It is January 200, and we have additional evidence it's wintertime as there is frost or ice on the ground (frozen rut). Through the setting the reader is introduced for the first time to the idea around which the plot evolves which is the long life of the Great-grandmother.

2. According to the text, what makes Great-grandmother Breckenridge famous? Explain by using supporting details from the text.

Sample answer: What makes the Great-grandmother famous is the fact that since she was born in 1899 and now is Jan.2001 she has practically lived in three different centuries (1899-1900, 1900-2000, 2001 is the beginning of the third century of her life).

3. Discuss Megan's feelings at the beginning and at the end of the story. Explain the reason for her feelings.

Sample answer: Megan, at the beginning of the story is angry, frustrated/disappointed, bored, and unhappy because her mother had taken her with her to visit the Great-grandmother. Megan states clearly that she hates going to the elderly people's home.

At the end of the story, though, Megan's feeling of discomfort has been replaced by admiration and affection for her great-grandmother. She was able to see her great-grandmother under a different light. She realized how clever, humorous, lucid/sane, and in touch with reality she was. One can also say that Megan was moved by her great-grandmother's comment about the difficulties/challenges a teenager like her has to face nowadays.

4. Identify and analyze **at least two** figures of speech in the extract. Explain their effect on the reader.

Sample answer: *"...like a Barbie doll" is a simile, used by the writer to compare Great-grandmother's appearance in a pink bed jacket and a same color bow in her thin hair with that of the world-famous girly/girlie appearance of the Barbie doll. Through the use of this comparison vivid imagery is created for the reader who is humored in the thought of the very old lady looking/being dressed like a girl.*

"Mom said in a quiet bark." This metaphor is also an oxymoron / it is an antithesis because the narrator compares the mother's voice to a bark and a dog's bark is not quiet. This antithesis suggests that Mom's voice is staccato, harsh and threatening but she does not want everyone around her to hear what she is saying, she just wants the woman from the suburban newspaper to hear her. This metaphor elicits the readers' fear of Mom, but also their admiration for her strength of character and her desire to protect her aging grandmother.

Other similes employed by the writer:

- *"Mom stood still as a statue," mother who remains totally motionless is compared with a stone which is associated with lack of mobility. Simile is used to point out how the surprise mom felt listening to her grandma's questions had caused her lack of reaction/ had made her freeze.*
- *"It was smooth as silk. You didn't know you were moving." Comparison between the well-known fine/extra soft feel or texture of silk and the smooth movement of the air-balloon. Used to indicate the enjoyable trip in it, which no one could foresee was going to end in a rough, dangerous, or even tragic way for its passengers.*
- *"The gondola heated up like an oven, and people peeled out of the windows." Comparison between the extreme heat caused by the explosion and a burning oven. The reader is able to realize the intolerable, devastating, scorching situation passengers found themselves in.*

Other metaphors employed by the writer:

- *"Quite an eerie, echoing voice" This metaphor compares great grandmother's voice to a haunted, old house that is situated high up on a mountain. When the*

north wind blows through the windows, it reverberates and sounds like a ghostly presence moving in and out of the house. This metaphor also implies that a part of great-grandmother's being has left her as if she is also ghostly herself. This metaphor evokes a sense of awe and wonderment because it suggests that her voice sounds otherworldly and yet is in the room.

- *“Mom and I went in and our eyes popped.”* Metaphor used to show the level of their surprise at the sight of the revived old lady and her transformation. Such was their awe/surprise that they felt their eyeballs had popped out of their sockets.
- *“Great-grandma paused, caught up in the memories.”* This metaphor emphasizes great grandmother's ability to perform because she gives the impression that she has many memories of this occasion. Memories are intangible thoughts, and no one can catch them or be caught by them. Thus, this metaphor indicates that she is sifting through her many memories of the past and that she is choosing which memory to bring up to the surface. Initially the reader wonders whether she can remember the events of the day she is recounting and feels sorry for the old woman. However, when the readers realize that she is putting on a performance for the journalist, they admire her for her sharp and imaginative mind, and for her ability to spin out whatever she thinks the journalists want to hear.
- *“Your network ratings are already in the basement.”* Through the use of this metaphor a comparison between an item in the basement (storage area under the ground level of a house) and one on a higher or top floor. The comparison clearly highlights for the reader the extremely low level of the network ratings and therefore the difficulty TV shows experience due to the extensive use of the internet websites. Grandma's fine sarcasm used in the metaphor adds to the reader's amusement and makes him understand her wit.
- *“The light went dead.”* The metaphor personifies the light. Light cannot die and it cannot **go** anywhere, it **is** everywhere. The purpose of this device is to emphasize the journalist's need to produce newsworthy material that will also entertain the audience and not disturb them. What great grandmother has said

is disturbing because the journalist/reporter knows that her predictions are real. The “death” of the light here signifies the deaths of their jobs. The effect of this metaphor is that it disturbs the readers in the same way that the reporter is disturbed by great grandmother’s prediction, because many jobs are on the way to extinction / death/elimination in the advent of technology and the robotic age.

- *“Her claw hand”*: comparison between her skinny, dehydrated, wrinkled hand, probably crooked and deformed by arthritis/old age and the sharp, slender, that resembles the curved nail on the toe of an animal. The imagery created in the minds of readers makes them see a crippled, weak old lady.

5. Write a short character profile of Great-grandmother Breckenridge using **three** adjectives. Support your characterization with evidence from the text.

Possible answers: Witty, intelligent, humorous/sense of humor, perceptive, alert, attentive, observant, keen, sharp, sensitive/understanding/considerate, wide-awake, informed, up-to-date, knowledgeable, wise, bold towards those who try to undermine her, manipulative, inquisitive (reads books and keeps abreast of what is happening around her and answers her questions).

Evidence: she makes clever remarks “Most people here don’t know their names” she notices the camera man dies his hair, she enjoys giving the interview and tries to expand it, she shows she’s acquainted with technology (“is the mike on?”) she mocks the TV ratings, her predictions are accurate and based on facts proving she’s informed, she shows sensitivity and wisdom with the comment to Megan about her teenage years.

6. What lesson do you think Great-grandmother wanted to give to her interviewers?

Sample answer: She wanted them to understand that they should not underestimate old people and resort to stereotypes. All people are not the same and younger people can learn from the experience and wisdom of the older. Additionally, the fact that one is old doesn’t necessarily mean he/she is not “all here”, and cannot use or appreciate what modern world has to offer (i.e. technological advancements).

7. Identify the climax in the story. Explain how it is resolved.

Sample answer: Ann's dilemma whether to allow for her grandma's interview to happen or not leads to the climax of the short story. The TV crew is outside grandma's room waiting to barge in and the reader is wondering what will happen next. The grandma expresses her wish to give the interview and resolves the climax and any thoughts created in the minds of readers or in the minds of the interviewers about whether she is in the position to handle an interview.

SECTION II: GRAMMAR AND SYNTAX

EXERCISE A: Fill in the blank spaces using the correct tense of the verbs in parentheses. Use active or passive voice.

1. Where *have you been* (you be)? I *expected you* (expect) an hour ago.
2. When *I arrived* (arrive) at the concert hall all tickets *had already been sold* (be).
3. My mother *was laying* (lay) the table in the garden while we *were lying* (lie) on the grass enjoying the sunshine and then my sister came and *laid* (lay) her towel next to me.
4. At the start of the part, the tables *had already been set up* (already set up), but the DJ *was still installing* (install) his equipment.
5. A new experiment *is being carried out* (carry out) in the lab now. I doubt though that the results *will have been announced /will be announced* (announce) by the end of April as promised.

EXERCISE B: Change the following statements from direct to indirect speech. Choose an appropriate reporting verb from the list below:

advise suggest deny refuse

1. "Me? No, I never bullied a classmate," said Bob to the Director.
 - *Bob denied that he had bullied a classmate to the director.*
 - *Bob denied having bullied a classmate to the Director.*
2. "I propose regular meetings for the committee," the minister said.
 - *The minister suggested regular meetings for the committee.*

- *The minister suggested that there (should) be regular meetings for the committee.*

EXERCISE C: Rewrite the following sentences using impersonal constructions or conditional sentences. Begin as indicated and punctuate correctly.

1. Scientists believe that the new coronavirus started in a rural area in China.
The new coronavirus *is believed to have started in a rural area in China.*
2. He was not vaccinated against the flu and now he is sick.
If *he had been vaccinated against the flu, he wouldn't be sick now.*
3. The construction company have renovated our summer house recently.
We *have had our summer house renovated recently.*

SECTION III. WRITING

“Old people are useful and active members of our families and community.”

Do you agree or disagree with the above statement? Write an opinion essay to support your perspective.

Suggested essay structure

Introduction

Thesis statement / expression of opinion

- *Argument 1 & justification*
 - *They can share their wisdom*
 - *They can tell us about important events that occurred in their lives some of which events are of historical value*
 - *They can support us emotionally and even physically sometimes*
- *Counter Argument 2 & justification*
 - *They can be a burden on families if they are difficult to live with*
 - *They can be demanding and expect young people to behave as they did when they were young.*
- *Conclusion*